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E A S T E R N E U R O P E

S O V I E T U N I O N

Propaganda Offensive Strenuous Soviet efforts to forestall the proposed Atlantic Pact are, by their very intensity, generally producing results opposite to those desired by the Kremlin. The recent speeches by Communist Leaders Thorez and Togliatti can be expected, if anything, to intensify existing support in France and Italy for the Pact. By publicly asserting that Communists in these countries would welcome invading Soviet forces, these leaders hoped to increase the fear of war and of Soviet occupation of Western Europe and also to demonstrate the unreliability of both France and Italy as prospective Pact members. This type of attack, however, tends to reinforce other factors that have been weakening Communist influence as a political force in France and Italy. Moreover, Communist leaders, by calling for a return to Communist militancy comparable to that of the late 1920's, are preparing the way for greater emphasis on sabotage and subversion.

Meanwhile, increased Soviet propaganda pressure on Scandinavia is also having little effect. The USSR may soon revive the Spitsbergen issue by asking Norway for assurances that no military bases will be built in the Spitsbergen archipelago. The Kremlin will probably claim that any defense preparations in the area would be a violation of the Spitsbergen Treaty of 1920. The Kremlin, anticipating Norwegian rejection of the Soviet-proposed non-aggression pact, is already accusing Norway of "aggression" and may use this as an excuse for demands on Finland, possibly by proposing joint Soviet-Finnish defense discussions. These prospective maneuvers

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probably would not change Norway's desire to join the Pact, and Finland's present Social Democratic Government would probably reject any such Soviet proposals. The Finnish Government may be strengthened by the inclusion of representatives of other non-Communist parties and thus be prepared to offer stronger opposition to future Soviet demands.

Merchant Shipping The USSR is attempting more and more frequently to force the masters of foreign vessels to open safes and sealed envelopes during calls at Soviet-controlled ports. Such incidents have involved merchant ships of the US, the UK, and other western powers. The USSR probably hopes to obtain intelligence which would disclose the disposition of western merchant shipping if hostilities broke out.

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